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OSFM Encourages Firefighters to Schedule Regular Screenings/Physicals to Help Reduce Cancer Related Deaths

From 2015-2020, 75% of the fire fighters added to the IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial died from occupational cancer.

Springfield, Ill- January is Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month. Cancer is the most dangerous and underrecognized threat to the health and safety of firefighters according to the Firefighter Cancer Support Network. The goal of this campaign is to provide fire fighters the necessary tools and guidance to develop life-saving protocols for cancer prevention and to support those with a cancer diagnosis within their departments. The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is joining forces with the Fire Fighter Cancer Support Network and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) to raise awareness about the increased risk of cancer amongst fire fighters

Firefighter-occupational cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths in the fire service. From 2015-2020, 75% of the fire fighters added to the IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial of Honor Wall in Colorado Springs, Colorado were of members who died from occupational cancer. According to a study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), firefighters face a 9 percent increase in cancer diagnoses and a 14 percent increase in cancer-related deaths compared to the general population. While protecting the firefighter during firefighting operations, personal protective equipment (PPE) becomes contaminated. Effective on-scene decontamination can reduce the level of surface polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) by 85% following an incident.

"I can't stress enough the importance of getting screened and doing your yearly physicals. Taking this time can help to spot something early, that if not found or treated, could lead to more serious issues in the future, or worse, loss of life," said Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Pere. "This disease is killing far too many of our brothers and sisters. If we all work together to limit our exposures, get screened and improve our lifestyles, we can greatly reduce the risks of cancer and come out a healthier fire service community."

The OSFM partnered with the Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI) and the MABAS-Illinois to create the State of Illinois Preliminary Exposure Reduction Training project in 2020. This project was developed to deliver critical firefighter health and life safety research, education, training and basic equipment to fire departments across the state. This project continues today and the

OSFM encourages departments to complete the training and join the growing list of departments who have received their buckets. All fire departments within the State of Illinois are eligible to receive free equipment after completion of the training.

To learn more about this program visit: <https://fsi.illinois.edu/decon/#!/index>.

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